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**Fran relief shifts to cleanup;
Baptist meal total tops 500,000**

By Steve Barber

**Baptist Press
9/25/96**

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist relief efforts in eastern North Carolina moved into a new phase the week of Sept. 23 with the departure of all but one feeding unit from the hurricane-stricken area.

More than 500,000 meals had been provided by Southern Baptist volunteers as of Sept. 24.

"This weekend will see another big push with cleanup and repair volunteers," said Mickey Caison, the Brotherhood Commission staffer who served as on-site coordinator during the peak of the response the week after Hurricane Fran came ashore Sept. 5.

Potential volunteers are asked to contact North Carolina Baptist Men before arriving in the area at 1-800-395-5102 or (919) 467-5100, extensions 335 or 333. The North Carolina cities of Jacksonville, Kinston and Wilmington are expected to be centers of cleanup and "mud-out" activity. More than 1,000 cleanup jobs already have been completed.

The one remaining feeding unit, operated by North Carolina Baptist Men, is stationed in Kinston. The surrounding area received tornadoes and flooding after the initial strike by Fran. In all, disaster units owned by eight state conventions were involved in the response.

The response to Hurricane Andrew in August 1992 still stands as the largest in the ministry's 26-year history, involving units from 15 states serving 2.6 million meals.

The Brotherhood Commission coordinates multi-state disaster response on behalf of all Southern Baptists. Contributions in support of disaster relief may be made to the Brotherhood Commission, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, TN 38104.

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**SBC, Roman Catholic teams
discuss biblical authority**

**Baptist Press
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WASHINGTON (BP)--A team of eight Southern Baptists met with a team of eight Roman Catholics to discuss the inerrancy of Scripture, Sept. 12-14 in Washington.

While both groups affirmed inerrancy, they had different definitions, according to Mark Coppenger, a member of the Baptist team and president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo.

The Southern Baptists insisted on the Bible's historical accuracy, Coppenger recounted. The Catholic team did not, stating their concept of inerrancy was more a matter of divinely inspired usefulness, Coppenger continued.

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This was the second meeting of the recently reconstituted Southern Baptist Convention-National Conference of Catholic Bishops Conversation. The annual meetings are aimed at clearing away misunderstandings the two groups may have of one another. A report on the Scripture discussion is to be published next year, said Jeffrey Gros, associate director of the NCCB Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, in a Catholic News Service report.

Meeting in the shadow of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception near the campus of Catholic University of America, the participants discussed such points of cooperation as opposition to the late-term partial-birth abortion procedure and defense of religious liberty in Islamic countries. But the differences were as pronounced as the points of agreement, Coppenger said.

For example, most Southern Baptists think "immaculate conception" refers to Jesus' virgin birth. However, Coppenger said, the Catholic belief is that Mary was born without original sin; from the point of her conception she received the grace of God. This doctrine is not taught in the Bible, Coppenger said, but Roman Catholics accept two other sources of authority from which to draw -- tradition and the magisterium, or teaching authority of the church. Southern Baptists, while granting that tradition plays a role in their faith life, claim the Bible as the sole authority, Coppenger said.

Jesuit priest Joseph Fitzmyer, a professor at Catholic University, offered a point-by-point analysis of four evangelical documents on Scripture, raising questions on how Southern Baptists interpret Scripture. The four documents he analyzed were the Baptist Faith and Message, the Report of the SBC President's Theological Study Committee and the Chicago statements on inerrancy and hermeneutics.

Coppenger responded with a critique of the Pontifical Biblical Commission's report on "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," finding fault with its portrayal of fundamentalism and its advocacy of the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation. He drew examples from a commentary on Galatians written by Baptist historian Timothy George for the Baptist Sunday School Board's New American Commentary series, the Catholic New Jerome Biblical Commentary and pronouncements by Popes Leo XIII and Pius X.

Gros, in the Catholic News Service account, noted the teams had "a wide-ranging discussion about the use of language, perceived to be pejorative by fellow Christians, without consulting them on how they are described. A principle was enunciated that language like 'fundamentalist' or 'sect' should only be used of a group who use it of themselves."

Foreign Mission Board Executive Vice President Don Kammerdiener brought a devotional on the uniqueness of the gospel, and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary President Paige Patterson closed the session with remarks on the mandate of evangelism.

The other Southern Baptist team members were George, dean of Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, Birmingham, Ala.; Phil Roberts, director of the Home Mission Board's interfaith witness department; Bill Gordon, associate director of the interfaith witness department; Richard Land, president of the Christian Life Commission; and Mark Dever, pastor of Washington's Capitol Hill Baptist Church.

The Catholic team also included the J. Kendrick Williams, bishop of Lexington, Ky.; Joan Delaney of the Maryknoll Sisters; Thomas P. Rausch, professor and chair of theological studies, Loyola Marymount University; Jean-Pierre Ruiz of St. John's University; Frank Ruff, Glenmary missionary priest and the bishops' conference representative to Southern Baptists, Nashville, Tenn.; and Jude Weisenbeck, ecumenical officer for the diocese of Louisville, Ky.

Next year's meeting in Birmingham, Ala., will continue the discussion of Scripture, with detailed focus on the Vatican II document, "Dei Verbum." In succeeding years, the teams will examine the topics of soteriology, ecclesiology, missiology and religious liberty.

**6 states total 52 percent
of 1996 SBC messengers**

By Herb Hollinger

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Messengers from Georgia churches topped the registration list at the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in New Orleans in June, with six states representing more than 52 percent of the total count, according to an analysis of the 1996 convention by Lee Porter, SBC registration secretary.

Porter said 14 states' messengers registered 89.7 percent of the total of 13,706 messengers in New Orleans.

States representing the top 10 in registration, in order, were: Georgia -- 1,274; Louisiana -- 1,218; Mississippi -- 1,202; Tennessee -- 1,159; North Carolina -- 1,154; Alabama -- 1,121; Texas -- 1,064; Florida -- 1,018; South Carolina -- 776; and Kentucky -- 613.

Porter said the 1996 annual meeting registration had some interesting comparisons to the last time the SBC met in New Orleans, in 1990. The 1990 meeting registered 38,403 messengers.

There were fewer churches represented in 1996 compared to 1990, Porter said, but 1996's messengers spent more, were from larger churches and included more men than in 1990.

In 1996, messengers were from 5,605 churches compared to 12,000-plus in 1990, Porter said. There were more males registered in 1996, 59.4 percent of the total, than in 1990 with 53.4 percent. There was a 5 percent increase in the number of messengers from churches with more than 500 members in 1996 compared to 1990. And, Porter's analysis revealed, the typical messenger in 1996 spent \$600 while in New Orleans compared to 1990 when \$300 was spent.

Georgia messengers topping the 1996 list was not surprising, Porter said, since in 1990 Georgia ranked second behind Texas in the totals. But Texas in 1996 dropped to seventh in the list with 1,064 messengers compared to 1990's total of 4,793.

Although Georgia's messengers came from 468 churches, the state with the largest number of churches represented was North Carolina with 498 followed closely by Mississippi with 488.

Only Delaware, Rhode Island and Vermont were not represented in the list of messengers, representing the 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Minnesota, New Hampshire, North Dakota each had one messenger while the District of Columbia, Maine and South Dakota each had two.

Fifty-eight churches at the New Orleans meeting had the maximum number of messengers allowed -- 10. Churches with only one messenger totaled 1,346 while another 2,816 had two messengers, most probably the pastor and his wife, Porter said.

Porter, SBC registration secretary since 1978, is a retired Baptist Sunday School Board official who now lives in Lawrenceville, Ga.

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**Bush ponders God's revelation,
life on Mars, evolution theory**

By Lee Weeks

**Baptist Press
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WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Galactic "Star Trek" voyages and tales from the "X-Files" of life on other planets are fantasy fueled by scientists' insatiable pursuit of evidence for evolution, said L. Russ Bush III, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary's academic vice president and dean of faculty.

"But the truth of the matter is," Bush said Sept. 19 speaking to a chapel audience on the Wake Forest, N.C. campus, "we've spent millions of tax dollars on big radio telescopes listening for some language, listening for some word from the universe, but we haven't heard it."

Since the first search for extraterrestrial intelligence in 1960, no identifiable signals have been detected in more than 70 radio searches, Bush said.

"We don't hear anything with intelligence from the rest of the universe," he said. "There are no words coming to us from other intelligences."

Reading from Psalm 19, Bush took issue with the New International Version translation of verses 3 and 4.

"In Hebrew it does not say there is no speech or language where their voice is not heard," Bush said, referring to the heavens' revelation spoken of in verse 3.

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"What verse 3 actually says is that the heavens have no speech and they have no words and no voice is heard from them," Bush said.

As for verse 4, Bush said: "To say 'their voice goes out into all the earth' is also a mistranslation. It's not the voice that goes out. In Hebrew, it's quite clear. It's the measuring line of the Surveyor (God)."

Bush said the Hebrew translation of Psalm 19 bears out that the heavens do not speak with a voice or language.

"When he (David the psalmist) talks about the heavens pouring forth speech and displaying knowledge, he is not saying that we are going to hear it in words. The revelation in words will come in the Scripture. The revelation that is in the heavens is not a revelation of language. Nevertheless, it does set forth knowledge of God."

Citing an Aug. 24 article in Science News titled, "Meteorites Hint at Early Life on Mars," Bush said scientists are now trying to prove life on Mars with the possible but uncertain detection of organic molecules bearing some characteristics of ancient single-cell bacteria found on earth.

According to the article, Bush said, scientists are studying a spot less than 1/100th of the thickness of a human hair on a meteorite believed to have fallen to the earth from Mars.

"There are many questions about the reliability of the evidence, but what if they eventually prove that there was a bacteria in that meteorite and that the meteorite came from Mars?" Bush suggested. "What does it prove? It just means that God for some reason created bacteria there.

"On thing is for sure, if it was alive, it is now extinct. And it did not evolve into intelligent life nor produce any kind of life other than itself. If the discovery of the single-cell life on Mars were to prove to be valid, I can see no negative impact that it would have on the truth of the Bible or on the gospel."

The heavens, Bush reiterated, do declare God's glory but not in words.

The sun, that huge ball of gas, more than 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit and 93 million miles from the earth, speaks volumes about who God is, Bush said.

"It's beautiful. It's bright. It has a pure spectrum of light. It is reliable and awesome in power. Recent research suggests that it is a homogeneous entity and may in fact be unique in the universe. It shines on everything in the world with life-giving light, and that's just like the law of God. The sun is a symbol. It doesn't speak with words but it's a symbol of what we see in the Scripture, for the law of the Lord also is perfect for us, just like the sun."

Bush said science does not have to discover evidence of life on other planets to prove that mankind is not alone in the universe.

"We're not alone in the universe but it's not because we may or may not find bacteria somewhere," Bush countered. "It's because there is a personal God who made the universe and who is using the universe to make himself known to us, and beyond that has given to us his written revelation."

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Elliff warns of enemies to spiritual awakening

By Charles Willis

**Baptist Press
9/25/96**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Four potential enemies exist as Southern Baptists attempt to lead the United States toward spiritual awakening, Southern Baptist Convention President Tom Elliff told trustees of the Baptist Sunday School Board during the opening session of their semiannual meeting Sept. 23.

Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., said preaching a "synthetic gospel," bitterness, immorality and a "casual approach" to the ministry are factors that could hamper a nationwide revival.

He said a synthetic gospel, like synthetic clothing, "looks like the real thing, feels like the real thing, but it's not the real thing and we like it because it doesn't take as much care as the real thing. We have filled our church rolls with people who are the results of the preaching and teaching and practicing of the synthetic gospel."

He said synthetic gospel is short on Holy Spirit conviction, repentance, faith and the lordship of Christ.

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"We may be asking many people in our convention to experience something which they cannot experience because revival is only for the regenerate. ... The truth of the matter is, many of the people cannot have revival because what they desperately need is true conversion. ... Probably one of the greatest harvest areas for evangelism may be in our own church rolls."

Regarding bitterness, Elliff said, "I believe there are many people who, because of a refusal to forgive, have developed bitter and uncaring spirits toward other individuals. ... I'm talking about events that may have happened years and miles away which, like little rudders on big ships, are still steering their lives."

Immorality, he said, is "a driving force for everything we do in America."

People want to do as they please and sin against God without consequence, Elliff said, "but that is not the way a holy God deals with us. He's a God of grace; he's a God of mercy. But we are living in a nation that is driven by immoral purposes right now, and the irony is that it is affecting the ministry. ... There is rarely a week that goes by that I do not sit down and counsel with a couple in the ministry whose marriage is falling apart, and (the cause) is immorality. And we have this idea that we're above that. No, we're not above that."

"It's OK to talk about God's love and God's mercy and God's grace, but when you start talking about holy living, people say, 'I want to go to some church where they talk about positive things.'"

A casual approach to the ministry is "an infection in the hearts and minds of many people in the ministry today who look upon the minister as CEO (chief executive officer)," Elliff declared. "If a minister sees himself as a CEO and the church as his employer to somehow push his agenda, they're going to treat him like a business -- hiring and firing. And is it possible that this idea of the respect and the honor of the ministry has come because there are many guys who know better how to write a resume than to exegete a verse?"

"Somehow we have got to get back to this issue that there is such a thing as the call of God to the ministry of the gospel. ... Yet there is the casual approach to the ministry. It is amazing to me how Jesus can come and suffer and bleed and die the most cruel and ignominious death you can imagine on the cross of Calvary, and how there are people in this world who will try to figure out what kind of a living they can make telling that story."

Elliff said he hears from pulpit committees who say prospective pastors don't want to pray about coming to the church until they know what kind of a "package" is being offered.

"Where did that come from? It doesn't come out of the Word of God. There is no biblical picture of that. I'm not saying that a person ought not to be wise, but that is not the issue. The call (of God) is the issue."

He said he has been "hung on one theme for about three years, and that is awakening. I have talked about it, preached about it, pled, begged to God and prayed for an awakening in our nation, that God would somehow just step in. But in our own Southern Baptist Convention I believe these four things stand out that we need to address."

Elliff praised the Sunday School Board's participation in "what has turned out to be one of the most deeply significant experiences of my life." He said he was "literally overwhelmed" when BSSB President James T. Draper Jr., offered resources of the board to support gatherings on the seminary campuses this year to pray for spiritual awakening.

The board funded an August mailing of a letter from Elliff to Southern Baptist pastors and other leaders, encouraging their participation in the seminary convocations. A second mailing in September included a prayer and fasting guide and helps to churches in emphasizing revival and awakening the last week of October.

"If I could say anything to you as a Sunday School Board, it would be whatever you do, whatever you write, whatever we put into the hands of people, I pray that we would continue addressing these issues. I pray that God will use the Sunday School Board to wake us up to the reality that these issues are at the heart of what is wrong in our nation."

**Former opera singers say
church work more gratifying**

By Todd Deaton

SENECA, S.C. (BP)--The Siberian-born immigrant's testimony is a spine-tingling tale of KGB interrogations, exile and secret anti-Soviet literature; the South Carolina native shares a story about unfulfilling success as international musicians. Together, they provide a ministry through music combined with a powerful witness of forsaking fame for faith.

Kimberly Justus and George Fridlender met by accident on a New York City subway platform while attending the Julliard School of Music. Kimberly was born in Long Creek, S.C.; George heralds from the opposite side of the world -- Siberia.

After graduation, the two were brought together in 1988 by what Kimberly calls "another incredible accident." She and George were chosen as "the only two out of about 500 people who auditioned for one-year positions with the Zurich Opera."

The next summer they returned to South Carolina to be married. "George and I stopped thinking a long time ago that these were accidents, we now know that it must be the Lord working his way in our lives," Kimberly says.

They spent five years as opera singers traveling throughout Western Europe. "But there was something about singing in the opera that wasn't nearly so gratifying as singing today in churches," she explains. "We knew that, but we didn't exactly know what to do about it."

Her mother, however, did, saying, "Instead of using your God-given talents to do God's work, you're using them to do your own work."

"Those words wouldn't leave our heads," Kimberly says. They looked around at their home, and all the beautiful things "didn't look so beautiful anymore."

Kimberly and George returned to America in 1994 with "no money, no place to live and, worst of all, no job," she recalls. "We had one thing we were sure of that kept us going through those difficult times -- a promise from God that there would be something great in store."

Using their musical talents to share their faith, the Seneca, S.C., couple has appeared in more than 70 South Carolina Baptist churches and performed at the state evangelism conference. "This is what Lord has shown us to do," Kimberly declares.

George agrees, "There's no greater satisfaction than hearing someone say, 'The Lord spoke to me through your talents.' How do you compare that blessing to singing in an opera?"

In their church appearances, George tells about his father, who was sentenced to 17 years in a Siberian concentration camp because he was seen entering a church.

When he asked his father how he survived, George recalls, "Each time he would say, 'Son, I survived through my freedom there. ... My body was incarcerated, but my spirit was free in the Lord.'"

George came to understand what his father meant when he was arrested while attempting to publish an anti-Soviet book written by his father. At the time, he was challenged by a pastor, "You're seeking the wrong type of salvation. The only type of salvation there is, is through accepting the Lord. That's how you obtain something much better than a quick fix on earth -- eternal life."

Surprisingly, he was released by the KGB.

"That was kind of a little miracle, but a bigger miracle happened two months later," he continues. "In the mail, we discovered the visa to leave the country." Although his father never made it to this country, dying in 1980 in an Austrian hospital, George acknowledges, "My mother and I were -- against all odds -- delivered by the grace of the Lord into the wonderful United States of America.

"I know the Lord did it," he affirms.

**RTVC, Southwestern Seminary
maintain strong relationship**

By Bryan McAnally

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--When Dennis Parrish was young, he never missed his favorite cartoon. Parrish was a devoted fanatic of "Jot," an personable animated dot who weekly solved his dilemmas using biblical truths.

"Mom," young Parrish asked his mother one morning, "who makes Jot?"

"Well, son, the Radio and Television Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention makes Jot," she answered.

"Wow," he said, with a glimpse of the future playing before his eyes, "someday I'd like to work for them."

Parrish, now director of the Christian communication center at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, remembers Jot fondly. The cartoon eventually brought Parrish's talents into the service of the Radio and Television Commission. He credits working at the RTVC to the strong relationship that exists between the organization and Southwestern.

"After my second seminary degree, the RTVC asked me to work on a three-month project," Parrish said. "I studied the demographic availability of Christian programming across the United States. This was all part of ACTS becoming a reality."

ACTS (American Christian Television Systems) is the national Christian cable network launched by the RTVC in 1984.

"From there," Parrish said, "a program asked me to fill in for an ill camera-crew member. I had never done it before, but it brought me from the coat-and-tie world of marketing to production. I became part of the crew that started ACTS, as an on-air producer. I later worked on the pilot show of the counseling program, 'Cope,' and stayed with the program for 480 episodes."

Parrish left the RTVC to return to Southwestern in 1985, recognizing the need for a relationship allowing future students the same opportunities given to him.

Since then, the bond between the two organizations has grown in strength and importance.

Currently, 27 of the 110 RTVC employees have a Southwestern link. RTVC employees include graduates, current students or their spouses.

Jerry Stamps, RTVC senior vice president, said the organizations' tie is a conscientious effort. "We actively pursue Southwestern students," he said. "A key element we seek in employees is spiritual sensitivity. We want to produce not just radio and television, but radio and television that influences people's lives. We're very confident people coming from Southwestern have the sensitivity we seek."

The benefit is mutual. "The RTVC provides the seminary with an avenue of training," Stamps said. "Students intern in radio, television and business administration. We provide employment opportunities to students and spouses. We are a family friendly organization and try to accommodate most students and their difficult schedules.

"Southwestern provides quality human resources," Stamps added. "The student body is a continual supply of committed, creative Christians bringing a superior work ethic and an honest desire to produce programs which magnify God at all times."

Debbie Wall is one of 14 Southwestern graduates on the RTVC staff. The 1990 communications graduate is responsible for fund-raising activities through direct mail. She recently toured with Dino, a popular Christian pianist, through 23 cities to promote "Covenant," an RTVC ministry promoting Christian family values in the media.

"I started as a graphic arts intern here, then part-time assisting two development directors. That provided on-the-job training and hands-on experience," Wall said. "Southwestern did everything possible to facilitate my RTVC work. I learned a lot about what goes on in Southern Baptist life. Mostly, though, I've learned growth is a process. God's faithfulness has shown through and I've learned to rely on him," Wall said.

Stan Grubb is another Southwestern graduate thanking the seminary for his RTVC job. As church media consultant, Grubb assists churches to best utilize the RTVC's resources.

Grubb also began as an intern, progressed into part-time work, then was hired as a full-time employee.

"The RTVC bought Family Net (the RTVC's broadcast station) about the time I graduated. The timing was perfect and I went into TV work," Grubb said.

"The seminary experience was the best thing that ever happened to me. A class called 'Media and Evangelism' made me understand the public's perception of the media and helped me use our programming to reach both the Christian and non-Christian audience.

"Coming to the seminary," Grubb continued, "I felt God wanted me in full-time media Christian service. I thought it would be radio, but the doors opened in television. As a student, I always thought it would be great to work at the RTVC, but knew I needed to sharpen my theological knowledge and professional skills.

"Had I gone to another seminary, I never could have become an intern here, and then I never would have had this job. I am thankful for the seminary's proximity to the RTVC," Grubb said.

Eight current Southwestern students are on the RTVC payroll, in both part-time and full-time positions. Darel Robertson, a doctorate student in religious education, has been an RTVC counselor for five years.

"In my opinion, I have the best job here," he said. "I get to share Jesus Christ with the people calling in to respond to our programs."

Underscoring the seminary's theological and counseling training, Robertson said, "It has been a privilege to receive the seminary's tutelage. It is Christian and biblically-based. I am not at a loss to share Christ or biblical principles because of Southwestern's teachings.

"Doing both has been a balancing act. Each organization honors the work of the other, and that cooperative spirit helps a lot," he added.

Alisha Holt began working at the RTVC as Grubb's assistant when her husband enrolled at Southwestern for the spring 1996 semester. Five months later, she, too, has signed up for classes.

"This job has been great," Holt said. "Working with Stan and ACTS helped me understand the cable industry. I have new insight because I get to work with cable companies daily."

Holt plans to do missions work following graduation, producing mission field videos. "I got my first experience doing a Mexico City social worker's video on a 12-step program for alcoholics. I will do my field education at the RTVC so I can learn even more," she said.

The connection between Southwestern and the RTVC extends beyond the classroom as well. Julia Hollars, producer of the RTVC's Family Enrichment Series and Family Show Case, answered the commission's posting on the seminary job board while her parents were students. Martin Coleman, director of program acquisitions, is the son of Lucien Coleman, Southwestern's professor emeritus of adult education.

A recent decision of the Southern Baptist Convention melds the RTVC into the new North American Mission Board. Although the RTVC will cease to exist in name, the production facilities will remain in Fort Worth. Accordingly, the organization continues to tap Southwestern's resources to fill its needs.

Kelli McAnally, director of program marketing at the RTVC and part-time Southwestern student, said she hopes fellow students will intern in her department. "We have so much work to do, including new aspects because of the realignment. This is an exciting time for a student to get some great experience and class credit as well," she said.

Stamps said the RTVC will work with the seminary as long as possible. "We would like to do more of what's been done in the past. Southwestern has been an invaluable tool, helping shape who we are and what we do. It is a cooperative relationship bringing glory to God."

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